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ABSTRACT

In the spring of 1995 Northern Arizona University initiated a pilot program for a new content emphasis for elementary education majors. This new emphasis, "Diversity in Educational Contexts," is designed to prepare teachers to instruct the diverse children they will encounter in their public and private classrooms. The new program addresses effective teaching of ethnic minority children, non-English speaking children, handicapped children, and gifted and talented children, and issues relating to the differential treatment afforded boys and girls in U.S. schools. The program has three components: foundation knowledge, personal interactions with diversity, and professional interactions with diversity. The evaluation of the program looked at three areas: (1) the overall perceptions of persons involved in the content emphasis; (2) suggestions for improving the program; and (3) change among student participants (by virtue of their participation in the program) in the areas of knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions. Data for the evaluation came from student journal entries, tests administered in each content emphasis class, focus group interviews, and questionnaires. The preliminary results of the evaluation suggest that students were able to transfer the knowledge and skills they learned into classroom situations, and they demonstrated the desire to know more about other cultures and people outside the context of the classroom. Faculty responses indicate that the opportunity to participate in such a diverse curriculum as well as having on-going discussion of their experiences provided students with unique and valuable opportunities to learn and reflect about issues they will face in the classroom. (Contains 19 references.) (ND)

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Development And Implementation Of A Program Of Study To Prepare Teachers For Diversity At Northern Arizona University: A Preliminary Report

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Abstract

In the spring of 1995 Northern Arizona University initiated a pilot program for a new content emphasis for elementary education majors. This new emphasis, titled Diversity in Educational Contexts, is designed to prepare teachers to instruct the diverse children they will encounter in their public and private classrooms. Though the elementary teacher education program at Northern Arizona University is quite strong, the graduates of our program are generally unprepared to effectively teach ethnic minority children, non-English speaking children, handicapped children, and gifted and talented children. Many times they also lack the skills they will need when dealing with issues related to the differential treatment afforded boys and girls in American schools. The new program is designed to address all of these issues. In this paper we discuss this program and our initial program evaluation.

Development And Implementation Of A Program Of Study To Prepare Teachers For Diversity At Northern Arizona University: A Preliminary Report

Introduction

With the globalization of our world's economic and political activity, the environment in which teachers serve is one that is also becoming globalized. Their students come from increasingly diverse backgrounds, bringing with them a multitude of culturally and linguistically varied perspectives. This globalization has augmented the need for wider cultural understanding and appreciation. Unfortunately, the effects of an increasingly diverse nation has, in some cases, led to ethnocentrism and a move towards monoculturalism. (Hargreaves, 1994) The implications of this for teachers are paramount and underscore the necessity for their constant recognition in teacher education programs. The following are just a few examples of the changing demographics in the United States. These changes represent a challenge for teachers and teacher education programs.

- Nearly 14% of school aged youth speak a language at home other than English. (Bennet, 1995)
- The number of immigrants to the United states between 1980 and 1990 was almost 9 million. About one third of these persons were from Asia and another third from Latin America. (Nieto, 1992)
- It is estimated that the number of students who speak a language other than English will increase from just over two million in 1986 to more than five million in 2020. (Nieto, 1992)
- 92% of this nation's teachers are Anglos and only 3% of them know a language other than English (Cannella & Reif, 1994).
- In the year 2000, the teaching force is predicted to still be the majority while the student population will be 40% minority in the United States. (Colville-Hall, Mac Donald, & Smolen 1995)
- Nieto (1992) has found in her studies that students who maintain their native languages and cultures are higher academic achievers. This finding suggests that teachers and policies should encourage language maintenance and cultural diversity.

In order to promote equity in our schools pre-service teachers must be engaged in a process where they not only learn the skills they need to teach in a culturally diverse setting, they must also develop the attitudes and motivation necessary to reach all of their

students. Changing the attitudes of students is not something that is easily accomplished through the more traditional approaches of teacher education. One response to this has been the creation of many teacher training programs throughout the United States that provide pre-service teachers not only with the knowledge and skills that a beginning teacher should possess, but also place a great emphasis on the cultural attitudes and values of the teachers (Cabello, & Burnstein, 1995; Colville-Hall, Mac Donald, & Smolen, 1995; Delany-Barmann, & Minner, In Press). Sometimes the experiences that the pre-service teacher has in such a program create some tension because they are asked to examine their own culture and are often presented with information that challenges some of their existing beliefs. However, according to Jana Noel (1995), any attitudinal change comes with a certain amount of tension. These types of changes are also more likely to occur over an extended period of time. Unfortunately, one semester is rarely enough for them to take place.

Some researchers say that the acquisition of new knowledge is not likely to change beliefs (Pajares in Cabello & Burstein, 1995). Attitudes and beliefs change as a result of experiences. These experiences over time are what challenge the old beliefs and create an opportunity for teachers to adopt new ones. Indeed, this is the position that we have taken at Northern Arizona University with our new content emphasis titled Diversity in Educational Contexts. This 18 hour component of our elementary education program provides the students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that they will need to be successful in the diverse classrooms in which they will be teaching. Because the program has a duration of one and one half years, the students have time to reflect upon their experiences and modify or reconstruct their beliefs and images about teaching.

The controversy over what constitutes good teaching practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students is one that continues to be debated by educators. Many different approaches to multicultural education and diversity have emerged as a result of this debate. The Diversity in Educational Contexts program is a response to this debate. We have developed a program that is based upon responsive instruction. One that provides our students with the knowledge, skills, and practical experiences that enables them to employ "instructional strategies and curriculum consistent with students' experiences, cultural perspectives, and developmental needs." (Collier in Cabello & Burstein, 1995)

Context Of This Program

The Center For Excellence In Education (CEE) is the unit on the campus of Northern Arizona University which prepares teachers, school administrators, and other

school professionals. Founded in 1984, the CEE is a large professional school supporting a very large undergraduate teacher education program. Approximately 1,600 undergraduate students are enrolled in one of several elementary education programs in the CEE. Students in these programs may select form a wide variety of options including five school-based programs and two campus-based programs. School-based programs include the Flagstaff Partnership, the Sedona Partnership, the PRAXIS Program, the Rural Special Education Program, and the Rural Multicultural Training Collaborative. A detailed description of these school-based programs has been written by Minner, Varner, and Prater (1995). Students may also enroll in one of two campus-based programs---the Traditional Elementary Education Program or the Elementary Cohort Program. In the traditional program, students enroll in one or more professional preparation classes per term. Courses may be completed in almost any sequence thus allowing non-traditional students the ability to complete a program of study in accordance with their needs. The Elementary Cohort Program is a four semester program. In this program of study, students complete four "blocks" of classes. In the first block, students complete course in literacy and language arts. In the second block, students complete courses in mathematics, science, and social studies education. In the third block, students complete classes in the areas of assessment and technology. In the final term of this program, students complete a 15 week student teaching experience. The cohort program is designed to maximize the synthesis of information across content areas, decrease unnecessary redundancies in the curriculum, and encourage team-teaching and other innovative activities on the part of faculty. For example, cohort classes are scheduled in such a way to allow faculty members to meet as a team, to discuss curricular and pedagogical matters related to their classes and to discuss the intellectual and professional growth of their shared students. In the cohort program, students are required to spend fifteen hours per term in local schools where they observe, assist, and deliver lessons under the direction and supervision of master teachers and university faculty members.

All of the program options in the CEE are somewhat unique, but all of them are designed to prepare students to "...create the schools of tomorrow" (CEE Mission Statement, 1993). The CEE Mission Statement also stipulates that graduates of our preparation programs should be well prepared for the diversity they will find in their practices and the faculty and leadership in the CEE has addressed this issue in a number of ways. First, a number of special content emphases (similar to academic minors) have been devised. All elementary education majors on our campus must complete an eighteen-semester hour content emphasis and they have more than thirty to select from. Several content emphases pertain to human diversity including a content emphasis in special

education and one in bilingual/multicultural education. Some students elect to pursue one of these content emphases and for those who do so, they receive substantial preparation in at least one area of human diversity. Students completing the special education content emphasis learn about handicapping conditions and gifted and talented students. This program of study is not designed to prepare students to enter the special education teaching profession, but rather designed to support the efforts of regular classroom teachers in meeting the needs of mildly handicapped and gifted youngsters. Students completing the content emphasis in bilingual/multicultural education gain knowledge and skills related to ethnic minority children, non-English speaking children, and bilingual learners. At present, about 27% of all elementary education majors pursue a content emphasis in either special education of bilingual/multicultural education (Minner, 1994). The faculty in the CEE have also attempted to prepare students for diversity by examining the classes in the elementary curriculum and revising course syllabi to more powerfully include knowledge and or skill components related to human diversity. For example, in a course pertaining to children's literature, faculty have recently purchased examples of literature which highlight ethnic and or cultural differences. Students taking this course are required to examine these texts and devise sample lesson plans using these materials. A third way in which faculty have attempted to make the elementary program more diverse pertains to the development and implementation of a wide variety of special enrichment activities including seminars, guest lectures, and special field-trips. In a course pertaining to the assessment and evaluation of elementary students, some faculty have asked guest lecturers to speak on alternative means of assessing ethnic minority students, special concerns related to interactions with non-English speaking parents, and issues related to assessment bias in special education placement decisions.

Though all of these activities probably had some impact, it was still possible for elementary education majors to graduate from the CEE without having much preparation for the diversity they would encounter in their professional practices. Though about 27% of all elementary education majors completed a content emphasis in either special education or bilingual/multicultural education, about 73% of the elementary education majors elected to pursue another content emphasis. Those completing either the special education or the bilingual/multicultural content emphasis were prepared in a rather narrow way. Those completing the special education program of study learned little about ethnic minority students. Those completing the bilingual/multicultural program of study learned little about students with special needs. Neither group learned much about gender issues. Some students were fortunate enough to complete classes which had been revised to include

strong elements pertaining to diversity. However, many students enrolled in classes which had not been so revised. Again, these students graduated with little background in the area of human diversity. To address this shortcoming, a small group of faculty met throughout the fall term (1994) to examine the elementary education program and to make recommendations regarding improvements. This group's work culminated in a large meeting involving numerous faculty members from the CEE, faculty members from throughout the university, and representatives from a variety of community civic and ethnic groups as well as from local agencies. A decision was made to devise a new content emphasis for elementary education students. The content emphasis was called "Diversity In Educational Contexts" and was designed to prepare elementary education majors for the full range of human diversity they were likely to find in their professional practices. It was to be an experimental program involving a small number of students and was to commence in the spring term, 1995.

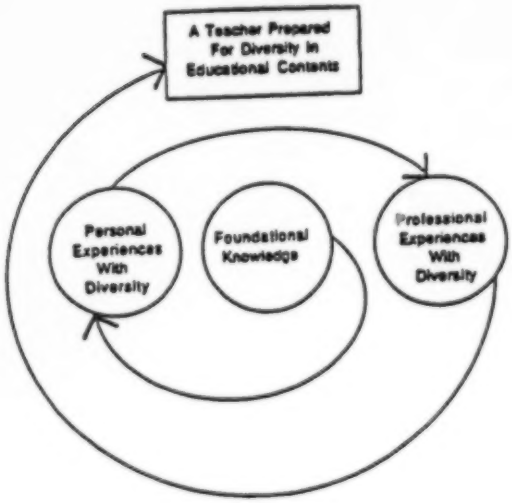
The Theoretical Basis Of Our Program

Pohan (1994), citing the work of Appleton, 1983; Banks; Babtiste and Gollnick, 1980; Burnstein and Cabello, 1989; Nieto, 1992; Pusch, Seelye, and Wasilewski, 1979; Sleeter and Grant, 1988 suggested that educators had to possess three areas of competency if they were to effectively instruct diverse children. Teachers had to possess a knowledge base in multicultural issues, they had to hold certain attitudes and beliefs, and they had to possess skills and procedures that enable them to foster success in their students. Our program taps all three areas. Students first gain foundational knowledge via courses in multicultural education, exceptionalities, gender issues, and language. We then attempt to alter the attitudes of students via their "personal encounters with diversity". Finally, we insure that students have skills via their "professional encounters with diversity". All three types of knowledge are important and addressing all three, we believe, sets our program apart from most (if not all) others attempting to fully prepare educators. Many preparation programs provide students with knowledge (e.g., a practicum in a diverse setting). Very few that we have found address the attitudinal component (our "personal encounters" class).

Program Description

The program of study is comprised of three components---foundational knowledge, personal interactions with diversity, and professional interactions with diversity. The elements of the program appear in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Element Of the Content Emphasis


A Teacher Prepared For Diversity In Educational Contexts
Personal Experiences With Diversity
Foundational Knowledge
Professional Experiences With Diversity

The foundational knowledge component consists of four types of classes and experiences. The first class pertains to multicultural education and is titled "Multicultural Issues In Educational Contexts". The purpose of this class is to provide prospective teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively instruct ethnic minority children, migrant children, non-English speaking children, and children of immigrants. This is a three semester hour class. The second class subsumed under the foundational knowledge component of the program is titled "Exceptional Children In Educational Contexts" and is designed to prepare elementary education majors to instruct mildly handicapped (e.g., learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, and mildly mentally retarded) and gifted and talented students. This is also a three semester hour class. These classes were completed by the students in the new content emphasis during the spring term, 1995. Students in the program were also required to complete the NAU Ropes Course toward the beginning of the term. This was done to begin to build a "team feeling" among the students and to assist them in quickly getting to know each other. In addition to the classes and the special teaming activities students completed this term, they also were required to attend a number of special seminars and several excursions. Seminars pertained to a variety of topics related to diversity including working with children with AIDS and working with children who are suicidal. Students participated in a field-trip to Kayenta, Arizona (located on the Navajo Indian Reservation) where they visited classrooms and participated in some cultural activities.

During the fall term, 1995, students completed the foundational knowledge component of the program. They completed a three semester hour course titled "Gender Issues In Educational Contexts" and a three semester hour class titled "Spanish For Teachers". In the course pertaining to gender issues, students acquire knowledge and skills related to the differential treatment of boys and girls in schools, bias in curriculum materials, the so-called "disappearance of giftedness" in adolescent women, and related issues. In the "Spanish For Teachers" class, students learn basic Spanish with a focus on the skills they will need to interact with Spanish speaking children and parents in school settings. They also learn a variety of Spanish songs and games they may use in their classrooms.

The content emphasis will be completed during the spring term, 1996 when students complete the final two courses in the sequence---personal interactions with diversity and professional interactions with diversity. The "personal interactions" class is designed to require students to think about the variety of contexts they may find themselves in after graduation, visit some of those contexts, and reflect upon them under the guidance and support of experienced faculty members. We are planning on visiting at least three kinds of contexts---a reservation community, a barrio community in the Phoenix area, and a border community. Each of these excursions will be preceded by readings and discussions about the context students are about to visit. We are anticipating that faculty from a variety of disciplines (e.g., sociology, humanities, anthropology, etc.) will speak with our students before and after each excursion and hopefully, some of them will even accompany the students on the trips. In the "Professional Interactions With Diversity" class, students will be placed in at least one school populated by large numbers of diverse learners. At that school site, students will progress through a sequence of observing, assisting, and planning and delivering lessons under the direction of master teachers and faculty members from the CEE. In addition to these school practica, students will also have some experience working in a local agency which serves diverse families. For example, we anticipate that some students will work in a local free food kitchen where they will design special enrichment activities and deliver special tutoring services for the children served at that site.

Preliminary Evaluation Data

We are in the midst of completing an evaluation of this program. The critical questions in our evaluation are (1) what are the overall perceptions of persons involved in

the content emphasis?, (2) what suggestions do persons involved in the content emphasis have for improving the program ?, and (3) what evidence exists that student participants change (by virtue of their participation in the program) in the areas of knowledge, skills, and or dispositions? The sources of data we are using to answer the evaluation questions consist of (1) an analysis of student journal entries, (2) scores from quizzes and tests administered in each content emphasis class, (3) focus group interviews, and (4) questionnaires. As this is a "preliminary" report on our project, not all evaluation data have been collected.

Student Participant Data

For nearly two semesters our students have been keeping journals for their classes in the content emphasis. These have served as an interesting source of information and feedback for us on the Diversity in Educational Contexts program. From these journals we are able to document some of the beliefs and attitudes of our students. For example, one student remarked in his journal after playing Bafa Bafa, "As the diversity grows greater, the people must grow more accepting and more open to change. For without a change in mentality and practice we will not succeed." (journal entry, January 19, 1995)

The journals also allow us to see how the students are transferring the knowledge and skills they learn in their classes into classroom situations. In one journal entry a student commented on his use of Spanish with a group of kindergarten students in Sedona. The students were working on a thematic unit involving spiders. This particular student used this opportunity to teach the children Itsy Bitsy Spider in Spanish.(journal entry, October 22, 1995)

The students are also demonstrating the desire to know more about other cultures and peoples outside the context of the classroom. For example, one student responding to a presentation on El Día de los Muertos (Day on the Dead) remarked "My goal is to travel abroad and see this holiday celebrated in a Latin American country. I think the Latin American culture is so interesting" (journal entry, November 2, 1995). Other students have suggested that our whole class do a field trip to Mexico together during the winter holidays. Just last week, a student was observed reading a novel by a Latin American author. These types of responses to learning Spanish were not evident in the first questionnaire given to the students. In fact, none of our students demonstrated a desire to use Spanish outside of

the classroom when answering a question about personal expectations for Spanish in the initial course questionnaire.

Faculty Participant Data

The students have had a diverse group of instructors for their program. However, because we are in the midst of our evaluation not all the data from the instructors have been collected. Nonetheless, we would like to provide some initial feedback concerning this program.

As co-author of this paper and instructor of two of the content emphasis courses (Multicultural Issues In Educational Contexts, and Spanish For Teachers), I will provide some of my own impressions of the program thus far. Over the past year I have had the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time with our students. We have shared many experiences and several friendships have developed. Each of us has been challenged both in and out of the classroom, beginning with the NAU Ropes Course and continuing with discussions regarding issues such as HIV and how to address and acknowledge grief of all types in the classroom. I have seen many of our students in tears during discussions and laughing uncontrollably in other situations. Indeed, I have experienced the spectrum of emotions and challenges with these students. Their opportunity to participate in such a diverse curriculum as well as having an on-going discussion of their experiences, provides the students with a unique and valuable opportunity to learn and reflect about issues that they will be faced with in their classrooms. Having the chance to continue to process experiences that we had together ten months ago allows them to continue to examine their own attitudes and beliefs and possibly change some of these in order to become more responsive teachers.

Other Preliminary Outcomes

There has been some resistance to the implementation of this new program and it has comes from a variety of sources, most notably faculty members who appear to have adopted one of four positions. A small group of faculty members have objected to the planning and implementation of this program on purely philosophical grounds. They believe that there "is no problem", that "graduates are already well prepared in the area of human diversity", and that this program is "overkill". A second group of faculty members

believe that the elementary curriculum is in very great need of change and that students should receive much more preparation in the area of human diversity. However, these persons object to the specific way we are adding these elements of diversity to the curriculum. Some of these persons have suggested that the design of the content emphasis promotes a philosophy of merely "adding on to" the curriculum and does not promote any synthesis of information on the part of student participants. Many of these persons support a curricular infusion model. A third group of faculty members have objected to our program based on the belief that the content emphases in special education and bilingual/multicultural education are sufficient. They contend that students completing one of these programs are well prepared for the diversity they will encounter in their classrooms. There have also been some concerns expressed that the implementation of the new content emphasis will detract from those already in existence. Finally, a small group of faculty members oppose the new program for what appears to be rather cynical reasons. Comments have been made that "this will never work", that "we've tried and tried to prepare our students for diversity and we never seem to get anywhere".

These various criticisms were not unanticipated on our part, but the level of emotion expressed by some critics has been. In some cases, faculty members in our organization have engaged in highly animated and emotional dialogues about the program. Occasionally, these dialogues have become rather personal. To address these many critics, we have elected to behave in a prescribed manner. We frequently provide updates to all faculty members about the content emphasis (i.e., how things are going, recent activities of the students in the program, etc.), but we retain a rather objective posture while doing this. We never suggest that the new program is superior to others nor do we typically pass on the many positive comments about the program made by students, faculty members, or others. We have elected to ask for faculty volunteers to teach in the program. No faculty member is forced to participate though we welcome faculty participation (at any level) at any time and this does occur from time to time. For example, this term a senior faculty member with no direct involvement in the program is enrolled in the Spanish For Teachers class. We continue to rather quietly pursue this new program which will be completed at the termination of the spring term, 1996.

Conclusions

There is a general recognition that teachers are not well prepared to promote the high academic achievement of all learners in their classrooms and this is particularly true for

diverse learners. In a very recent survey conducted by the American Council on Education, about thirty-percent of all new teachers stated that "...neither the curriculum nor the faculty prepared them for diverse classrooms" (USA Today, November 1, 1995, p. 6D). Though faculty in the Center For Excellence In Education at Northern Arizona University have attempted to address this matter in a variety of ways, many graduates from that program continue to complete their formal professional preparation programs without significant preparation in the area of human diversity.

We see our new content emphasis as a way to prepare elementary education majors for the full range of human diversity they are likely to find in their professional practices. Though we have only conducted a preliminary analysis of the data, we are pleased with the results that we are seeing. The students have demonstrated an increase in their knowledge about the areas studied. Equally as important, they are developing skills and attitudes necessary for the diverse population of students that they are likely to find in their schools. Again, these are only preliminary data. Nonetheless, we are confident that our program is preparing students in a way that will have a positive impact both state-wide and locally. Until the diverse student population in our country is taught by educators who are prepared to effectively instruct them, many children will continue to have diminished opportunities. This is a loss we simply cannot tolerate.

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Author Notes

We are very interested in communicating with other professionals who are interested in our work and or who are engaged in similar activities. If you are interested in receiving additional information about our project (e.g., class syllabi, evaluation reports, etc.), please contact us.

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